INSTRUCTIONS FOR PATIENTS WITH ORTHOSTATIC HYPOTENSION

DIET
Please drink two large glasses of water (16 oz.) as soon as you awaken each morning. Drink water additionally before you anticipate walking or standing for 15-minute intervals or longer. Eat a moderately high sodium diet. Try to avoid large meals, eat smaller amounts more often. Coffee and tea contain caffeine, which may help increase blood pressure. Try to avoid scheduling activities for one in two hours after meals.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
You may do as much as you are able to tolerate. It is harmful to you and your autonomic nervous system to remain in bed during the day. If you feel tired, it is better to rest in a chair. Exercise daily by stretching and toning exercises in a chair or in bed.

HOT ENVIRONMENTS
Avoid hot environments, including saunas, hot tubs, and hot baths. Plan activities around the cooler times of the day if you work outside. Heat causes your blood vessels to expand and pool blood in your legs, which decreases your blood pressure. Keep your home temperature comfortable but not too warm.

AVOID OVER-THE-COUNTER (OTC) MEDICATIONS
Cold and allergy medicine, appetite suppressants (like Dexatrim) and medicines for pain and arthritis frequently contain compounds that can increase your blood pressure. It is all right to take the following: Acetaminaphen (TYLENOL) for a fever pain or headache. Maalox, Mylanta, Tums, or any antacid is okay for indigestion. For diarrhea, Pepto-Bismol or Kaopectate are fine. You may use Metamucil or Dulcolax (bisacodyl) for constipation.

COMPRESSION STOCKINGS
Compression stockings (30 – 40 mmHg) may be of benefit to you when you are standing for a period of time. Do not wear them if you will be going to take a nap or when you lie down. These can be purchased in many Medical Supply shops. In Nashville, Metro Medical at 1191 Church Street (phone 615-329-3150) does stock these.

ELEVATE HEAD OF BED
You need to sleep with the head of the bed elevated 5 – 10 degrees. This will help you decrease your blood pressure when you are lying down.

URINE RETENTION
Remember to check your post-void residuals periodically. If you have 200 ml or more in your bladder after you void, you should do the in and out self-catheterizations four times a day.

SICK
Expect to have more symptoms when you have the flu, diarrhea or a viral illness or a fever. During that time, get plenty of rest and increase your salt and fluid intake.